E/1999/24
E/CN.3/1999/29

United Nations

Statistical Commission

**Report on the thirtieth session
(1–5 March 1999)**

Economic and Social Council

**Official Records, 1999
Supplement No. 4**

Economic and Social Council
Official Records, 1999
Supplement No. 4

Statistical Commission

Report on the thirtieth session (1–5 March 1999)

United Nations • New York, 1999

Note

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

ISSN 0251-9976

Summary

At its thirtieth session, the Statistical Commission adopted the Classifications of Expenditure According to Purpose, and Revised Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System. It also adopted practical guidelines for good practices in technical cooperation in statistics.

In addition, the Commission recommended to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of a draft resolution by which the Council would establish annual (instead of biennial) sessions of the Commission, and the Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination would cease to function.

In following up the statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences and summits, the Commission (a) commended the United Nations Statistics Division on the trial compilation of the Minimum National Social Data Set which the Commission had adopted at its twenty-ninth session and the initial work to take stock of indicators being produced and disseminated by the international community, while recognizing the inventory of development indicators being compiled by the Division as a tool for a more in-depth analysis of duplications, overlaps and inconsistencies; (b) urged international agencies to work towards harmonizing and rationalizing the various sets of indicators being used at the international level, and to improve coordination in their collection in order not to overburden countries; and (c) urged international agencies and bilateral donors to assist countries in building sufficient statistical capacity in order to produce development information. The Commission reviewed and endorsed a draft report on indicators which the Division was preparing for an informal meeting of the Economic and Social Council on indicators in May 1999.

The Commission considered the follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the high level and coordination segments and resolutions of the Economic and Social Council, and brought to the attention of the Council a number of actions that it had taken consistent with the Council's requests. The Commission expressed its willingness to take up relevant issues that might be referred to it by other functional commissions to ensure a more integrated approach to issues of concern to the Council.

The Commission reviewed the ongoing work that the groups of countries and international organizations are undertaking in various fields of economic, social and environment statistics. In particular, the Commission:

(a) Re-emphasized the need for these groups to formulate clear objectives and agendas and make them available to the Commission;

(b) In relation to the evaluation of the International Comparison Programme, requested the Chairman to appoint a group to advise on further steps to address the shortcomings that had been identified, and requested the international organizations active in the Programme to set out plans to take account of relevant recommendations;

(c) Decided that the Task Force on Environment Statistics should be discontinued, and that coordination in that field should be carried out by the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, to the extent possible.

With regard to the Special Data Dissemination System of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), members of the Commission emphasized the need for sufficient flexibility in the System in order to allow countries to focus on country specific priority areas of statistical development. The Commission requested the United Nations Statistics Division and IMF to act to improve the communication and consultation process.

The Commission reviewed its functioning, and adopted new approaches in order to improve its operation.

The Commission endorsed the planned production of a document that would improve the understanding of the fundamental principles of official statistics adopted previously by the Commission, promote awareness of them and assist in their implementation.

The Commission welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, emphasized that the Institute should work in full collaboration with existing agencies doing related work, and called upon those agencies to integrate the Institute into their formal and informal collaborative arrangements.

The Commission endorsed the proposed programme of work and priorities of the United Nations Statistics Division, including the implementation plan and timetable for realizing the recommendations of the in-depth review of the statistical programme carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

Contents

Chapter		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention	1–4	1
	A. Draft resolution	1	1
	B. Draft decision	2	1
	C. Matters brought to the attention of the Council	3–4	4
II.	Economic statistics	5–60	5
	A. National accounts	5–18	5
	B. International trade statistics	19–24	6
	C. Service statistics	25–27	8
	D. Finance statistics	28–32	8
	E. Other economic statistics	33–60	8
III.	Demographic, social and migration statistics	61–70	13
IV.	Environment statistics	71–77	15
V.	Statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences	78–92	16
VI.	Follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council's high-level and coordination segments and to its resolutions	93–97	18
VII.	International economic and social classifications	98–108	20
VIII.	Technical cooperation	109–115	22
IX.	Coordination and integration of international statistical programmes	116–131	23
X.	United Nations economic and social information system	132–133	27
XI.	Proposed institute for statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	134–138	28
XII.	Programme questions and related matters	139–142	29
XIII.	Provisional agenda and dates for the thirty-first session of the Commission	143–145	30
XIV.	Adoption of the report of the Commission on its thirtieth session	146–154	31
XV.	Organization of the session	155–162	32
	A. Opening and duration of the session	155–157	32
	B. Attendance	158	32
	C. Election of officers	159	32

D. Agenda and organization of work 160-161 32
E. Documentation 162 33

Annexes

I. Attendance 34
II. List of documents before the Commission at its thirtieth session 36

Chapter I

Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

A. Draft resolution

1. The Statistical Commission recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Functioning of the Statistical Commission

The Economic and Social Council,

Bearing in mind Economic and Social Council resolutions 8 (I) of 16 February 1946 and 8 (II) of 21 June 1946 concerning the establishment and terms of reference of the Statistical Commission, resolution 1566 (L) of 3 May 1971 in which the Council further refined the terms of reference and resolution 1306 (XLIV) of 31 May 1968, by which the Council established the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination and gave it its initial task,

Welcoming the series of reviews that the Statistical Commission has carried out since 1993 on its role and functioning and that of its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination,

Taking into account General Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields,

Recognizing the need to provide for more continuity of the Commission's decision-making and oversight of the global statistical process,

Recognizing the need for a more flexible and rapid response to emerging and topical developments in international statistics than is possible through the biennial meetings of the Statistical Commission,

Wishing to enable the Statistical Commission to more continuously carry out its role in following up the statistical implications of the major United Nations conferences and summits and the agreed conclusions of the high-level and coordination segments of the Economic and Social Council and of its resolutions, thus providing enhanced support to the Council in carrying out its own responsibilities in this area,

1. *Decides* that the Commission shall meet annually, beginning in 2000, for a period of four working days in New York, and decides that the small additional cost shall come from existing resources;

2. *Also decides* that, with immediate effect, the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination shall cease to function.

B. Draft decision

2. The Statistical Commission recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft decision:

Report of the Statistical Commission on its thirtieth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the thirty-first session of the Statistical Commission

The Economic and Social Council:

(a) Takes note of the report of the Statistical Commission on its thirtieth session;

(b) Decides that the thirty-first session of the Commission shall be held in New York from 29 February to 3 March 2000;*

(c) Approves the provisional agenda and documentation for the thirty-first session of the Commission as set out below.

Provisional agenda and documentation for the thirty-first session of the Statistical Commission

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

   Documentation

   Provisional agenda and annotations

   Note by the Secretariat on the organization of the work of the session

   Note by the Secretariat on the state of preparation of documentation for the session
3. Economic statistics:

   (a) National accounts;

   Documentation

   Report of the Task Force on National Accounts

   Report of the Secretary-General on the milestone assessment of the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993, by member States

   (b) International trade statistics;

   Documentation

   Report of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics

   (c) Service statistics;

   Documentation

   Report of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services

   (d) Finance statistics;

   Documentation

   Report of the Task Force on Finance Statistics

   (e) Other economic statistics.

   Documentation

   Reports of the Canberra Group on Household Income Statistics, the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, the Expert Group on Capital Stock Statistics, the Expert Group on Intangibles, the Ottawa Group on Price Indexes, the Paris

* Should the Council not adopt the draft resolution contained in section I.A above, the dates "29 February to 3 March 2000" should be replaced by the dates "5–9 March 2001".

Group on Labour and Compensation, and the Round Table on Business Survey Frames

Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics

Report of the Friends of the Chairman on the International Comparison Programme

Report of the International Monetary Fund on developments in the Special Data Dissemination Standard/Global Data Dissemination Standard

4. Demographic, social and migration statistics.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General

Report of the Siena Group for Social Statistics

5. Environment statistics.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General

Report of the London Group on Environmental Accounting

6. Statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the informal meeting of the Economic and Social Council on indicators

Report of the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics

7. Follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council's high-level and coordination segments, and to its resolutions.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General

8. International economic and social classifications.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General

Report of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics

9. Coordination and integration of international statistical programmes.

Documentation

Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its twentieth (2000) session

Report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirty-third (1999) and thirty-fourth (2000) sessions

Report of the Secretary-General on the global integrated presentation of the work plans of the international organizations in statistical methodology, the annotated list of previously adopted standards, and the "virtual expert group"

Report on best practices for official statistics

10. Programme questions and related matters.

Documentation

Draft programme of work of the United Nations Statistics Division for the biennium 2002–2003: proposals concerning the medium-term plan for statistics

11. Provisional agenda for the thirty-second session of the Commission.

12. Report of the Commission on its thirty-first session.

C. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

3. The following decision adopted by the Statistical Commission is brought to the attention of the Council:

Decision 30/101. Documents considered in connection with the coordination and integration of international statistical programmes

The Statistical Commission takes note of the following documents:

(a) Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its nineteenth session (E/CN.3/1999/20);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General on the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on actions and decisions taken at its thirty-first session (E/CN.3/1999/21);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Coordination Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirty-second session (E/CN.3/1999/22);

(d) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the ad hoc group established by the Statistical Commission to explore new approaches to its structure and operation (E/CN.3/1999/23);

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on options for meetings of the Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination (E/CN.3/1999/24);

(f) Report of the Secretary-General on the global integrated presentation of the work plans of the international organizations in statistical methodology (E/CN.3/1999/25);

(g) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on Some Best Practices for Official Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/26).

4. The attention of the Council is also drawn to the other decisions and recommendations of the Commission (see paras. 18, 24, 27, 32, 58–60, 70, 77, 92, 96, 97, 106–108, 115, 125–131, 133, 138, 142 and 145).

Chapter II
Economic statistics

A. National accounts

5. The Commission considered item 3 (a) of its agenda at its 490th and 491st meetings, on 1 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on National Accounts (E/CN.3/1999/2);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the milestone assessment of the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993, by member States (E/CN.3/1999/3);

(c) Draft classifications of expenditure according to purpose (PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/84);

(d) Minutes of the last two meetings (April and September 1998) of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts (ISWGNA) (background documents).

6. At its 490th meeting, on 1 March, the representative of the World Bank, Convener of ISWGNA, made an introductory statement.

7. At the same meeting, a senior official of the United Nations Statistics Division also made an introductory statement.

8. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the United States of America, the Netherlands, Germany, Australia, Japan, the Russian Federation and Romania.

9. At the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for Canada, Hungary and Austria.

10. Also at the same meeting, statements were also made by the observers for the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), the Conference of European Statisticians.

11. At the same meeting, statements were also made by the representatives of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

12. Also at the same meeting, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division made a statement.

13. At its 491st meeting, on 1 March, the representatives of Pakistan, Australia, India and Côte d'Ivoire made statements.

14. At the same meeting, the observer for Canada made a statement.

15. Also at the same meeting, statements were also made by the observers for the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ESCAP, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and ECLAC.

16. At the same meeting, statements were also made by the representatives of the Observatoire économique et statistiques d'Afrique subsaharienne (AFRISTAT) and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific.

17. Also at the same meeting, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division made a statement.

Action taken by the Commission

18. The Commission:

(a) Approved the proposal for an updating mechanism for the System of National Accounts, 1993 (1993 SNA), as described in the report of the Task Force on National Accounts, with one change: the period within which the 24 member countries of the Statistical Commission may approve an amendment of the type "interpretation" or "change" should be extended to 60 days. It was emphasized that all the steps of the amendment process, in particular those calling for review by all national statistical offices, should be strictly observed;

(b) Agreed in principle with the proposed amendment referring to the treatment of financial derivatives. It asked the Intersecretariat Working Group to consider specific comments made by member States, and to circulate the redrafted text to all national statistical offices and thereafter to the members of the Commission, in accordance with the agreed procedure as amended in paragraph 18 (a) above;

(c) Approved the publication of the draft classifications of expenditure according to purpose (PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/84). The Commission noted the offer made by the representative of Eurostat to cooperate in a pilot study on how to test the implementation of the classification of outlays of producers by purpose;

(d) Noted the proposals for further work in the following areas: gross domestic product volume measures, national accounts and employment, measurement of insurance output, financial intermediation services indirectly measured, asset transfer costs, government accounting, exhaustiveness/measurement of the non-observed economy and dissemination standards;

(e) Recalled that the purpose of the milestone assessment had been to create an instrument to detect progress and/or to identify difficulties encountered by countries or groups of countries in their implementation efforts, as well as to focus technical cooperation activities. Accordingly, the Commission asked the Secretariat to strengthen the analytical portion of future assessment papers, highlighting why progress has or has not been made within or between regions. Individual countries would not be identified in such reporting, which should describe the activities undertaken by the United Nations Statistics Division and the regional commissions as a result of the analysis of the data used to determine the milestones, and should be prepared in close cooperation with the regional commissions;

(f) The Commission asked ISWGNA to determine whether there is a match between its work programme and the needs of countries, particularly those at milestone level 0 or 1. In case of a mismatch, ISWGNA was asked to make the necessary adjustments and eliminate any existing gaps. Furthermore, such assessment should become a regular part of the milestone report in the future;

(g) The Commission welcomed the Statistics Netherlands initiative to host a workshop on gross domestic product (GDP) volume and price measurement, in cooperation with the United Nations Statistics Division.

B. International trade statistics

19. The Commission considered item 3 (b) of its agenda at its 491st meeting, on 1 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/4);

(b) Addendum: note by the Secretary-General on the follow-up to discussions and conclusions of the Task Force concerning the Commodity Trade Statistics Database and the Central Product Classification (E/CN.3/1999/4/Add.1).

20. At the 491st meeting, on 1 March, the observer for the World Trade Organization (WTO), Convener of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics, made an introductory statement.

21. At the same meeting, a senior official of the United Nations Statistics Division also made an introductory statement.

22. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Japan and Australia.

23. At the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for Canada and Nigeria.

Action taken by the Commission

24. The Commission:

(a) Agreed that the treatment of electronic commerce in international trade statistics should be clarified, particularly in terms of defining its coverage and methods of data collection; the Commission took note of the plan of the International Statistical Institute and the Singapore Department of Statistics to hold a meeting on the subject in December 1999;

(b) Endorsed the proposed work on the manual for international trade statistics, emphasized the importance of taking advantage of country experiences and requested the United Nations Statistics Division to give special attention in the manual to the measurement of adjustments to customs statistics for balance-of-payments purposes;

(c) Recognized that there would be a continuing need by users for international trade statistics analysed according to the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC);

(d) Considered that it was important to evaluate the usefulness and applicability of trade statistics according to Central Product Classification (CPC) aggregates for economic analysis, and welcomed the intention of the United Nations Statistics Division to produce a data set of merchandise trade statistics according to the Central Product Classification (goods part) on diskette as an input into reviewing and evaluating that Classification and its use;

(e) Reconfirmed its support for the work of the United Nations Statistics Division on producing the planned publication on the statistical territories of the world for use in international merchandise trade statistics;

(f) Agreed that in the short term, the United Nations Statistics Division should maintain the Commodity Trade Statistics Database as it currently exists but should develop, in consultation with users, a strategic plan for its rationalization, taking account of the continuing need for data according to SITC, as set out in paragraph 24 (c) above, and providing adequate lead time for users to adjust to the rationalization plan;

(g) Emphasized that the United Nations Statistics Division should continue its efforts to make its Commodity Trade Statistics Database comprehensive in country coverage, and encouraged countries to provide their detailed commodity-by-partner trade statistics to the Division for inclusion in the Database;

(h) Endorsed the efforts of the United Nations Statistics Division, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Eurostat to rationalize their data-

collection, processing and storage systems to reduce reporting burdens on countries, reduce duplicate processing and increase the compatibility of their databases.

C. Service statistics

25. The Commission considered item 3 (c) of its agenda at its 491st meeting, on 1 March 1999. It had before it the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services (E/CN.3/1999/5).

26. At the 491st meeting, on 1 March, the observer for OECD, Convener of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services, made an introductory statement.

Action taken by the Commission

27. The Commission took note of the completed activities and proposed schedule put forward by the Task Force for the completion of the draft manual on statistics of international trade in services.

D. Finance statistics

28. The Commission considered item 3 (d) of its agenda at its 491st meeting, on 1 March 1999. It had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on Finance Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/6).

29. At the 491st meeting, on 1 March, the representative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Convener of the Task Force on Finance Statistics, made an introductory statement.

30. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the United States of America and Australia.

31. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for Canada and Nigeria.

Action taken by the Commission

32. The Commission recognized the concerns of countries about the complexities and high resource-intensiveness of measuring external debt, particularly for short-term liabilities of the corporate sector, and the need to compile and publish components of external debt based on creditor as well as debtor sources for improved data quality and accuracy. In this context, it also took note of ongoing efforts to compare alternative methods of measuring external debt and to enable the advantages and disadvantages of the available methods to be determined. The Commission noted the work of IMF in developing the *Manual on Monetary and Financial Statistics* (expected to be available in 1999) and the *Manual on Government Finance Statistics*, which is expected to be available in late 2000.

E. Other economic statistics

33. The Commission considered item 3(e) of its agenda at its 491st, 492nd and 493rd meetings, on 1 and 2 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the city groups (E/CN.3/1999/7);

(b) Addendum: note by the Secretary-General transmitting a note prepared by the International Labour Office on the terms of reference and functioning of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/7/Add.1);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the consultant on the evaluation of the International Comparison Programme (E/CN.3/1999/8);

(d) Addendum: note by the Secretary-General transmitting the observations of the World Bank on the report (E/CN.3/1999/8/Add.1);

(e) Letter dated 16 May 1997 from the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division to all heads of national statistical agencies (background document);

(f) Background note by the Australian Bureau of Statistics entitled "Future of the International Comparison Programme";

(g) Background note by the Australian Bureau of Statistics entitled "Statistical perspective on the IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard";

(h) Background note by IMF entitled "Special Data Dissemination Standard: background for discussion".

34. At the 491st meeting, on 1 March, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division provided a general introduction to the item.

35. At the same meeting, the representative of the United States of America made a statement.

36. At the 492nd meeting, on 2 March, the representative of Australia made an introductory statement on the Canberra Group on Household Income Statistics.

37. At the same meeting, the representative of India made an introductory statement on the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics.

38. Also at the same meeting, the representative of Australia made an introductory statement on the Expert Group on Capital Stock Statistics.

39. At the same meeting, the observer for OECD made an introductory statement on the Expert Group on Intangibles.

40. Also at the same meeting, the observer for Canada made an introductory statement on the Ottawa Group on Price Indexes.

41. At the same meeting, the representative of the International Labour Organization (ILO) made an introductory statement on the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics.

42. Also at the same meeting, the observer for France made an introductory statement on the Paris Group on Labour and Compensation.

43. At the same meeting, the observer for Canada made an introductory statement on the Round Table on Business Survey Frames.

44. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Côte d'Ivoire, Japan, Iceland, the United States of America, India, Australia, Portugal and the Netherlands.

45. At the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for Algeria, France, Canada and Spain.

46. Also at the same meeting, the observer for Palestine made a statement.

47. At the same meeting, the observers for the ILO, IMF and the World Bank made statements.

48. Also at the same meeting, the observers for ECLAC, AFRISTAT and Eurostat made statements.

49. At the same meeting, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division made a statement.

50. At the 493rd meeting, on 2 March, the representative of the World Bank made an introductory statement.

51. At the same meeting, the representative of Australia also made an introductory statement.

52. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of China, Côte d'Ivoire, India, the Russian Federation, the United States of America, the Czech Republic, Australia, Germany and China.

53. At the same meeting, the observers for Nigeria and Canada made statements.

54. Also at the same meeting, the observer for IMF made a statement.

55. At the same meeting, the representative of ESCAP made a statement.

56. Also at the same meeting, the observers for OECD, Eurostat, the ESCAP Committee on Statistics and the Conference of European Statisticians made statements.

57. At the same meeting, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division made a statement.

Action taken by the Commission

58. With regard to city groups, the Commission:

(a) Welcomed the improved reporting format on the activities of city groups. It also commended the efforts of the city groups and the United Nations Statistics Division to make information on city groups more widely available through Internet Web sites;

(b) Re-emphasized the need for city groups to formulate a clear objective and agenda and make them available to the Commission;

(c) Noted the activities undertaken by the Canberra Group on Household Income Statistics, the Expert Group on Intangibles and the Round Table on Business Survey Frames;

(d) Welcomed the focus of the Expert Group on Capital Stock Statistics leading up to the publication of a manual on this topic;

(e) Noted the various efforts under way in Latin America, Asia, francophone West Africa and Europe to measure activities of the informal sector, and encouraged the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics to draw on relevant information and experiences. The Commission stressed the need to fine-tune the already agreed upon definitions of the concept of "informal sector" and related concepts. Some members of the Commission encouraged the Delhi Group to pursue its work in such areas as quality issues, measurement of value added, measurement of women's participation and inclusion of the social dimensions of the informal sector;

(f) Encouraged the Paris Group on Labour and Compensation to continue to identify critical issues in labour statistics with a view to making proposals for future revisions of international standards. It was also suggested that the Group take into account the close connection between labour force statistics and national accounting;

(g) Noted the establishment of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics (ISWGPS) with a mandate to prepare price index manuals. While priority is to be given to the updating of the consumer price index manual, the Commission welcomed the offer of IMF to advance the work on a producer price index manual. The need of an overall framework for price statistics was emphasized. The Commission suggested that the manuals focus on a description of best currently implementable practices and — where applicable — of the range of alternatives;

(h) The Commission urged ISWGPS to draw upon the expertise of the Ottawa Group on Price Indexes. In particular, ISWGPS was requested to communicate to the Ottawa Group its needs and to encourage the Group to make specific contributions to the manuals on leading edge thinking on theoretical and practical problems.

59. With regard to the International Comparison Programme (ICP), the Commission:

(a) Commended the report on the evaluation of ICP prepared by the consultant Jacob Ryten on behalf of the United Nations, the World Bank and IMF;

(b) Noted that while ICP served several important needs, in its current form it suffered from a number of serious drawbacks, both administrative and financial, that hampered its effectiveness;

(c) Accepted that ICP has significant timeliness and quality problems, and that an agenda to deal with these problems, enhance the transparency of ICP to member countries and support research to deal with unresolved conceptual problems is required. In order to ensure that progress is made, the Commission therefore agreed:

(i) To request the Chairman to appoint a group to advise on further steps to address these shortcomings;

(ii) To request OECD/Eurostat to prepare, within three months, a report describing future plans for their Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) programme, taking account of the recommendations of the evaluation report by Ian Castles and — where appropriate — aspects of the Ryten report, and to make the results available for information;

(iii) To rely on joint efforts by a group composed of the World Bank, IMF and the United Nations Statistics Division to prepare within three months an implementation plan setting out practical steps that need to be taken to address issues raised in the Ryten report, paying particular attention to quality, timeliness, transparency and resources issues so as to place ICP on a sound footing, and to submit their proposals to the Chair;

(iv) To ask the group, based the above reports and the observations made by the friends of the Chair, to circulate widely a more definitive proposal to statistical offices, regional commissions and other international agencies, soliciting their reactions and comments;

(v) That progress on the topic be considered at the next meeting of either the Statistical Commission or its Working Group in the year 2000.

60. With regard to the IMF Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS):

(a) The Commission acknowledged that SDDS has had a positive impact on the statistical systems of many countries, in particular with regard to transparency. However, members of the Commission expressed serious concerns about the proposed extension of SDDS in the area of external debt statistics. They emphasized the need for sufficient flexibility in SDDS in order to allow countries to focus on country-specific priority areas

of statistical development and to avoid diversion of scarce resources to lower priority areas. Some members of the Commission also argued against sanctioning countries for non-compliance by taking their metadata off the Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board, and expressed some reservations about the IMF's ability to effectively and fully monitor compliance with the standards, especially if it were to decide to monitor data quality;

(b) The Commission was not satisfied with the existing consultation processes, including those in countries in which national statistical offices are not sufficiently involved. The United Nations Statistics Division, as the secretariat of the Statistical Commission, offered to assist with communications between IMF and statistical agencies. The IMF representative indicated that she would carry these thoughts back to IMF headquarters, and that efforts would be made to further enhance the process of consultation.

Chapter III
Demographic, social and migration statistics

61. The Commission considered item 4 of its agenda at its 494th meeting, on 3 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on progress in demographic, social and migration statistics (E/CN.3/1999/9);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on Draft Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System (E/CN.3/1999/10);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Siena Group for Social Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/11);

(d) Draft principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system (PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/19/Rev.2).

62. At the 494th meeting, on 3 March, a senior official of the United Nations Statistics Division made an introductory statement.

63. At the same meeting, the representative of Australia made an introductory statement.

64. Also at the same meeting, the representatives of Japan, Jamaica, Australia, Iceland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and China made statements.

65. At the same meeting, the observers for Morocco and France made statements.

66. Also at the same meeting, the observer for Palestine made a statement.

67. At the same meeting, the observers for the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and ESCAP made statements.

68. Also at the same meeting, the observers for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) made statements.

69. At the same meeting, the observer for the Conference of European Statisticians made a statement.

Action taken by the Commission

70. The Commission:

(a) Commended the work of the Expert Group on Draft Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System; expressed its appreciation for the involvement of experts in civil registration and vital statistics from all regions in its review, as well as UNFPA and PAHO; and welcomed the publication of the five related handbooks;

(b) Endorsed the draft principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system (PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/19/Rev.2), as revised by the Expert Group on Draft Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System in document E/CN.3/1999/10;

(c) Took note of the point raised by the representative of France, namely that the concept of vital statistics in French differed from that in English, and must be clearly defined in the principles and recommendations;

(d) Requested the Secretariat to publish the principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system as quickly as possible in all the official languages of the United Nations;

(e) Took note of the report of the Siena Group for Social Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/11, annex);

(f) Requested the Secretariat to resolve the question of the nomenclature related to Palestine contained in the report of the Secretary-General on progress in demographic, social and migration statistics (E/CN.3/1999/9);

(g) Took note of the rescheduling of the next issue of the *Compendium of Human Settlements Statistics* to the 2000–2001 biennium.

Chapter IV
Environment statistics

71. The Commission considered item 5 of its agenda at its 494th meeting, on 3 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on environment statistics (E/CN.3/1999/12);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the London Group on Environmental Accounting (E/CN.3/1999/13).

72. At the 494th meeting, on 3 March, the Officer-in-Charge of the Environment, Energy and Industrial Statistics Branch, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, made an introductory statement.

73. At the same meeting, the observer for Canada made an introductory statement.

74. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the Netherlands, Hungary, Australia, Germany, the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Iceland.

75. At the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for Canada and Cape Verde.

76. Also at the same meeting, a statement was made by the observer for Centro di Ricerca e Documentazione Febbraio 74 (CERFE), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

Action taken by the Commission

77. The Commission:

(a) Approved the work programme of the United Nations Statistics Division in the field of environment statistics;

(b) Approved the suggestion made by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities at its thirty-second session that the Task Force on Environment Statistics be discontinued;

(c) Stressed the need for continued coordination in environment statistics, and approved the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities carrying out such coordination to the extent possible;

(d) Welcomed the continued work of the London Group on Environmental Accounting leading to the revision of the system of integrated environmental-economic accounting (SEEA).

Chapter V

Statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences

78. The Commission considered item 6 of its agenda at its 494th and 495th meetings, on 3 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on harmonization and rationalization of development indicators in the United Nations system(E/CN.3/1999/14);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/15);

(c) Draft report on harmonization and rationalization of development indicators to be submitted to the forthcoming informal meeting of the Economic and Social Council on this topic (background document);

(d) A paper entitled "The statistical measurement of poverty", prepared by Simon Schwartzman, President, Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (background document).

79. At the 494th meeting, on 3 March, a senior official of the United Nations Statistics Division made an introductory statement.

80. At the same meeting, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division made an introductory statement.

81. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Japan, Portugal and Germany.

82. At the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for Spain, Austria and Nigeria.

83. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for the ECLAC, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNFPA and Habitat.

84. At the 495th meeting, on 3 March, the observer for ECLAC made an introductory statement.

85. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Mexico, Argentina, India and Côte d'Ivoire.

86. Also at the same meeting, the observer for Canada made a statement.

87. At the same meeting, a statement was made by the observer for the World Bank.

88. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for the ESCAP Committee on Statistics, ESCAP and ECA.

89. At the same meeting, statements were made by the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, and Eurostat.

90. Also at the same meeting, a statement was made by the observer for CERFE, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

91. At the same meeting, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division made a statement.

Action taken by the Commission

92. The Commission:

(a) Commended the United Nations Statistics Division on the trial compilation of the Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS), and the initial work to take stock of indicators being produced and disseminated by the international community. It recognized the inventory of development indicators being compiled by the Division as a tool for a more in-depth analysis of duplications, overlaps and inconsistencies;

(b) Noted that while interest in indicators highlighted the important role of statistics in planning and monitoring development, the large number of indicators requested by different international agencies often overtax the capacity of countries, particularly developing countries;

(c) Urged international agencies to work towards harmonizing and rationalizing the various sets of indicators being used at the international level, including the use of common definitions and methods. It also called on the agencies to improve coordination in collecting information in order not to overburden countries. The Commission welcomed the role that the United Nations Statistics Division has played as an honest broker in the inter-agency working group on indicators for common country assessment in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process, and reaffirmed the role of countries in the compilation of indicators;

(d) Affirmed that MNSDS is a useful set, that could provide guidance to countries interested in developing a basic social statistics system;

(e) Urged international agencies and bilateral donors to assist countries in building sufficient statistical capacity in order to produce development information routinely, which satisfies the data demand for both national programming and international reporting. It encouraged the United Nations funds and programmes to make statistical capacity-building a priority within UNDAF;

(f) Noted that most international agencies and countries recognize the elimination of poverty as their overriding priority, and that development indicators, specifically poverty indicators, have most value when linked directly or indirectly to policy formulation and administrative operations. It supported the activities carried out by the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics as presented by ECLAC, and requested the Group to continue its activities, paying special attention to the nature of the data required for analysing the causes of poverty, the relation between poverty and social exclusion, and the effect of public services on poverty alleviation. It also noted that progress is being made in national data-collection programmes and regional initiatives to improve data on poverty.

Chapter VI

Follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council's high-level and coordination segments and to its resolutions

93. The Commission considered item 7 at its 495th meeting, on 3 March. It had before it an informal paper prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division (a) summarizing the ministerial communiqué and summary of the President of the Economic and Social Council of the 1998 high-level segment of the Council,[1] the agreed conclusions of the 1998 coordination segment of the Council,[2] Council resolutions 1998/44 and 1998/46, and Council decision 1998/290, (b) reviewing the implications for the Statistical Commission, and (c) setting out the relevant actions taken by the Statistical Commission.

94. At the 495th meeting, on 3 March, a senior official of the United Nations Statistics Division made an introductory statement.

95. At the same meeting, a statement was made by the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Action taken by the Commission

96. The Commission agreed to bring to the attention of the Economic and Social Council the following actions that it had taken consistent with the Council's requests:

(a) The Commission has reviewed its functioning on a number of occasions and introduced improvements, including a review at its thirtieth session (see chap. IX for details);

(b) The Bureau of the Commission has always played a crucial role, particularly through the functioning of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, of which the Bureau comprises the core membership;

(c) For the thirtieth session of the Commission, the Chairman of the twenty-ninth session is serving as a Vice-Chairman to promote continuity, a practice that is expected to continue;

(d) The Bureau of the Commission met with the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council during the Commission's thirtieth session at the invitation of the President of the Council to try to find ways to improve their interaction;

(e) The government representatives attending the Commission (both members and non-members of the Commission) are almost always heads of national statistical offices;

(f) The Commission has made its documents concise and issue-oriented, and they are largely available in all the official languages of the Commission at the time of Commission sessions;

(g) Issues are referred by the Commission to other functional commissions, as appropriate;

(h) The Commission adopts a decision-oriented report on its sessions;

---

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/53/3), chap. IV, para. 5.

[2] Ibid., chap. VI, para. 3.

(i) The Commission works within its mandate and cooperates with other functional commissions, as needed;

(j) The regional commissions participate fully in the work of the Commission;

(k) The Commission has reviewed and supported the work of the United Nations Statistics Division on indicators, including the draft report prepared by the Division, which will be considered by the Economic and Social Council at its informal meeting on indicators in May 1999 (see chap. V for details).

97. The Commission expressed its willingness to take up relevant issues that might be referred to it by other functional commissions to ensure a more integrated approach to issues of concern to the Economic and Social Council.

Chapter VII
International economic and social classifications

98. The Commission considered item 8 of its agenda at its 495th and 496th meetings, on 3 and 4 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on evaluation of progress in the implementation of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3, and the Central Product Classification, Version 1.0 (E/CN.3/1999/16);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on international economic and social classifications (E/CN.3/1999/17);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/18);

(d) Background documents entitled "Standard statistical classifications: basic principles", "Preamble: international family of economic and social classifications" and "Proposed future work programme of the Classification Subgroup of the Voorburg Group on the Central Product Classification".

99. At the 495th meeting, on 3 March, the observer for Canada made an introductory statement.

100. At the same meeting, a senior official of the United Nations Statistics Division made an introductory statement.

101. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Australia and the United States.

102. At the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for Canada and Austria.

103. Also at the same meeting, the observer for the ESCAP Committee on Statistics made a statement.

104. At the same meeting, the observer for Eurostat made a statement.

105. At the 496th meeting, on 4 March, the representative of Australia made a statement.

Action taken by the Commission

106. The Commission separated the discussion into two parts, the first dealing with the organizational issues of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics, the second with issues of classifications.

Issues related to the Voorburg Group

107. The Commission recommended that the future work programme of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics be focused on problems of service product prices.

Issues of classifications

108. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the work programme as defined in the reports on statistical classifications (E/CN.3/1999/16, E/CN.3/1999/17 and the background document on the proposed work programme of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics), and agreed in principle with the strategies laid out in the reports;

(b) Recommended that the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications be the central coordinating body for implementing the proposed work programme, and that its tasks include classification revisions, practical proposals to bring about the convergence of existing international and multinational classifications, and review of the underlying principles. The Expert Group should work to improve the supporting materials for the International Standard Industrial Classifications of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and the implementation, assessment and future revision of ISIC and CPC. The tasks proposed for the ISIC task force, as defined in document E/CN.3/1999/16, should be carried out by the Expert Group;

(c) Decided that the United Nations Statistics Division should continue to invite all those agencies and countries who are key players in the development of international and multinational classifications and ensure representation of developing countries;

(d) Noted that the United Nations Statistics Division is prepared to host Expert Group meetings and provide funds for the participation of developing countries;

(e) Recommended that the decision as to whether the CPC sub-group will also be a sub-group of the Expert Group of Economic and Social Classifications be made by the Expert Group at its next meeting.

Chapter VIII
Technical cooperation

109. The Commission considered item 9 of its agenda at its 496th meeting, on 4 March 1999. It had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Workshop on Improving Technical Cooperation in statistics on some guiding principles for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics (E/CN.3/1999/19).

110. At the 496th meeting, on 4 March, the representative of the Netherlands made an introductory statement.

111. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Mexico and Côte d'Ivoire.

112. At the same meeting, statements were also made by the observers for Algeria and Cape Verde.

113. At the same meeting, the observer for Palestine made a statement.

114. At the same meeting, statements were also made by the observers for ESCAP and ECLAC.

Action taken by the Commission

115. The Commission:

(a) Commended the work done by Statistics Netherlands and the United Kingdom, and endorsed the guiding principles for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics, except that it agreed to rename them "practical guidelines for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics";

(b) Agreed to the wide dissemination of the practical guidelines to national statistical offices, regional and international organizations;

(c) Agreed that the practical guidelines would be reviewed after two or three years, taking into account relevant experience in the field of technical cooperation.

Chapter IX

Coordination and integration of international statistical programmes

116. The Commission considered item 10 of its agenda at its 495th, 496th and 497th meetings, on 3, 4 and 5 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its nineteenth session (E/CN.3/1999/20);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on actions and decisions taken at its thirty-first session (E/CN.3/1999/21);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirty-second session (E/CN.3/1999/22);

(d) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the ad hoc group established by the Statistical Commission to explore new approaches to its structure and operation (E/CN.3/1999/23);

(e) Report of the Secretary-General on options for meetings of the Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination (E/CN.3/1999/24);

(f) Report of the Secretary-General on the global integrated presentation of the work plans of the international organizations in statistical methodology (E/CN.3/1999/25);

(g) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on Some Best Practices for Official Statistics (E/CN.3/1999/26);

(h) Conference room paper containing the report of a working session on best practices in statistics, held in Singapore from 12 to 14 January 1999.

117. At the 496th meeting, on 4 March, a senior official of the United Nations Statistics Division made an introductory statement.

118. At the same meeting, the representative of the Czech Republic made an introductory statement.

119. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of Japan, Australia, the Netherlands and Côte d'Ivoire.

120. At the same meeting, the observers for France and Singapore made statements.

121. Also at the same meeting, the representative of the World Bank made a statement.

122. At the same meeting, a statement was made by the observer for the Economic Commission for Europe.

123. Also at the same meeting, a statement was made by the observer for the International Statistical Institute.

124. At the same meeting, the Director and a senior official of the United Nations Statistics Division made statements.

Action taken by the Commission

125. At the 495th meeting, on 3 March, the representative of Iceland, also on behalf of Australia, Botswana, Canada, Iceland, India, Mexico, the Netherlands, Singapore, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America,

introduced a draft resolution (E/CN.3/1999/L.5) entitled "Functioning of the Statistical Commission".

126. At the 497th meeting, on 5 March, the Secretary read out a statement on the programme budget implications of draft resolution E/CN.3/1999/L.5, entitled "Functioning of the Statistical Commission".

127. At the same meeting, the Commission agreed that the statement on the programme budget implications should be included in the report. The statement read as follows:

"1. Under the terms of operative paragraphs 1 and 2 of draft resolution E/CN.3/1999/L.5, the Economic and Social Council would decide (a) that the Statistical Commission shall meet annually, beginning in the year 2000, for a period of four working days in New York; (b) that the small additional cost shall come from existing resources; and (c) that with immediate effect, the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination shall cease to function.

"2. The attention of the Commission is drawn to the inclusion, as part of the Council decision in operative paragraph 1, of the reference to the absorption of additional cost within existing resources. The question of additional appropriation or absorption within existing resources is the prerogative of the General Assembly and not of the Economic and Social Council. Thus, the adoption of wording on financial matters outside the sphere of competence of the Economic and Social Council would have no effect. In this context, it is recalled that the budgetary procedure established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and 42/211 of 21 December 1987 applies to the decision to annualize the sessions of the Statistical Commission, and that this procedure could lead to either absorption or appropriation, according to the merits of the situation as assessed by the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

"3. Should the Commission decide to adopt the draft resolution, that decision would have programme budget implications for the biennium 2000–2001 as follows:

(a) Currently, the 24 members of the Commission and the 12 Members of the Working Group are entitled to the reimbursement by the United Nations of the cost of their travel to attend the sessions of these two bodies. Past experience has shown that the average cost of one ticket amounts to $3,200. The annualization of the sessions of the Commission implies that 12 additional representatives would be entitled to the reimbursement of the cost of their travel. It is therefore projected that the additional cost for travel of representatives entailed by the annualization of the sessions of the Commission would amount to $38,400;

(b) At this stage, it is not possible to assess whether the additional amount of $38,400 could be absorbed within the provision for travel of representatives to be included under section 09, 'Economic and social affairs', of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000–2001, or whether there would be a need for the appropriation of this amount by the General Assembly. The issue would be considered by the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session in the light of the decision that the Economic and Social Council would have taken on the proposal contained in the draft resolution. Should it be concluded at that time that an appropriation would be necessary, such action would be taken in accordance with the budgetary procedure established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211 referred to above;

(c) Conference servicing is currently provided to the biennial five-day session of the Commission and four-day session of the Working Group. Should the Economic

and Social Council adopt the proposal contained in the draft resolution and inasmuch as this would result in the abolition of the Working Group, no additional conference servicing resources would be required to service the four-day annual sessions of the Commission."

128. Also at the same meeting, the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland made a statement.

129. At the same meeting, the Commission adopted the draft resolution (see chap. I, sect. A).

130. The Commission:

(a) Decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council that the Commission hold annual meetings of four days each, provided that the small additional cost shall come from existing resources. The Commission also decided that should the Commission be able to hold annual meetings, its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination should cease to function. The Commission noted that while this proposal involved an increase in travel costs it also reduced the costs of the Commission/Working Group's combined meetings by the cost of one day of conference services;

(b) Decided that in the event that the Commission is not allowed to hold annual sessions, the Chairman of the Commission should consult with the Bureau of the Commission and the Secretariat to determine what steps, if any, could be taken within the authority of the Commission that would meet the objectives of having an annual Commission session, and should then take those steps;

(c) Supported the Working Group's endorsement (see E/CN.3/1999/20, para. 35(b)) of the recommendations of the ad hoc group to explore new approaches to the operation of the Statistical Commission, as follows:

(i) Present an integrated programme of statistical (methodological) development work for discussion in the Statistical Commission;

(ii) Give the current Bureau of the Commission (if necessary, complemented by any others whose participation is deemed useful by the Chairman) more of a steering role;

(iii) Promote inclusiveness of countries in the Commission's work, and create an "international cyber platform";

(iv) Further improve the focus of documentation for meetings of the Commission;

(v) Consider modalities for enhancing the involvement of important international users;

(d) Requested the United Nations Statistics Division to proceed with the database and integrated presentation of the work plans in statistical methodology of the international organizations, and requested all organizations to participate in that endeavour;

(e) Requested the United Nations Statistics Division to prepare an annotated list of previously adopted statistical standards as a companion document to the integrated presentation;

(f) Welcomed the presentation of the "virtual expert group" meeting that had been presented by the United Nations Statistics Division, and considered that it was consistent with the recommendations set out by the ad hoc group in its report (see E/CN.3/1999/23, paras. 1 (f) and 30–32, and appendix III), and requested the Division to proceed along the lines that the Secretariat had indicated (see E/CN.3/1999/25, para. 7 (d));

(g) Requested the United Nations Statistics Division to report to the Commission on the implementation of paragraph 130 (d), (e) and (f) above at its next session;

(h) Welcomed the work of the Prague Group on Some Best Practices for Official Statistics and the follow-up working session on best practices in statistics held in Singapore from 12 to 14 January 1999, and (i) endorsed the planned production of a document which would improve the understanding of the fundamental principles of official statistics, promote awareness of them and assist in their implementation, (ii) endorsed the establishment by the United Nations Statistics Division of the framework for a Web site (including an appropriate search engine) that would feature the above document and serve as a referral system for relevant country practices; and (iii) requested the Division to prepare a revision of its handbook on statistical organization;

(i) Endorsed the invitation that the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination had made to countries to inform international organizations of any duplications in statistical data collection observed by countries;

(j) Decided that the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination, at its twentieth session (if that session should be held), should comprise the officers of the Statistical Commission at its thirtieth session, namely G. Charumbira (Botswana — Chairman); M. Cervera Flores (Mexico), V. Dinculescu (Romania), K. Wallman (United States) (Vice-Chairs); and M. D. Asthana (India — Rapporteur); as well as the representatives of the following member States of the Statistical Commission:

Argentina	H. Montero
Australia	W. McLennan
China	Shao Zongming
Côte D'Ivoire	Guessan Bi Kouassi
Czech Republic	E. Outrata
Japan	M. Horie
United Kingdom	T. Holt

(k) Endorsed the agenda of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination for its twentieth session, as proposed by the Working Group at its nineteenth session and amended during the thirtieth session of the Commission, and requested the Secretariat to finalize that agenda;

(l) Noted that the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination would hold its twentieth session in New York from 29 February to 3 March 2000 (should the Commission not meet in 2000).

Documents considered in connection with the coordination and integration of international statistical programmes

131. At the 497th meeting, on 5 March, on the proposal of the Chairman, the Commission took note of the documents listed in paragraph 116 (a)–(g) above (see chap. I, sect. C, Commission decision 30/101).

Chapter X

United Nations economic and social information system

132. The Commission considered item 11 of its agenda at its 496th meeting, on 4 March. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on draft standards of the United Nations Economic and Social Information System for data structure and metadata in international data exchange and dissemination (E/CN.3/1999/27).

Action taken by the Commission

133. The Commission took note of the above-mentioned report.

Chapter XI

Proposed institute for statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

134. The Commission considered item 12 of its agenda at its 496th meeting, on 4 March 1999. It had before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of UNESCO on the proposed institute for statistics (E/CN.3/1999/28).

135. At the 496th meeting, on 4 March, the representative of UNESCO made an introductory statement.

136. At the same meeting, a statement was made by the representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

137. At the same meeting, a statement was made by the observer for Canada.

Action taken by the Commission

138. The Commission:

(a) Welcomed the establishment of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics;

(b) Welcomed the broad nature of its mandate, including its emphasis on reliable, robust and timely statistics that are policy relevant and its support for the development of statistical and analytical capabilities in countries;

(c) Emphasized that the Institute should work in full collaboration with the existing agencies doing related work, and called upon those agencies to integrate the Institute into their formal and informal collaborative arrangements.

Chapter XII

Programme questions and related matters

139. The Commission considered item 13 of its agenda at its 496th meeting, on 4 March 1999. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Note by the Secretariat containing the draft programme of work of the United Nations Statistics Division for the biennium 2000–2001 (E/CN.3/1999/CRP.1 and Corr.1);

(b) Note by the Secretariat containing the medium-term plan of the United Nations Statistics Division for the period 1998–2001 (E/CN.3/1999/CRP.2;

(c) Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the first part of its thirty-eighth session (A/53/16, part one; relevant extract);

(d) Report of the Secretary-General on programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1996–1997 (A/53/122 and Add.1; relevant extract);

(e) Background paper on the implementation plan and timetable for realizing the recommendations of the in-depth review of the statistical programme contained in document E/AC.51/1997/2.

140. At the 496th meeting, on 4 March, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division made an introductory statement.

141. At the same meeting, the representative of Pakistan made a statement.

Action taken by the Commission

142. The Commission took note of the above-mentioned reports, and endorsed the proposed programme of work and priorities of the United Nations Statistics Division, including the implementation plan and timetable for realizing the recommendations of the in-depth review of the statistical programme.

Chapter XIII

Provisional agenda and dates for the thirty-first session of the Commission

143. The Commission considered item 14 of its agenda at its 497th meeting, on 5 March 1999. It had before it a note by the Secretariat containing the draft provisional agenda for its thirty-first session (E/CN.3/1999/L.3).

144. At the same meeting, a senior official of the United Nations Statistics Division made a statement and circulated an informal note containing amendments to document E/CN.3/1999/L.3.

Action taken by the Commission

145. The Commission:

(a) Approved the provisional agenda and documentation for the thirty-first session, as amended, subject to review by the Working Group or the Bureau (see chap. I, sect. B);

(b) Recommended that its thirty-first session be held in New York from 29 February to 3 March 2000 (should the Economic and Social Council approve annual sessions of the Commission) or from 5 to 9 March 2001 (should the Council not approve annual sessions) (see chap. I, sect. B).

Chapter XIV

Adoption of the report of the Commission on its thirtieth session

146. At its 497th meeting, on 5 March 1999, the draft report of the Commission on its thirtieth session was introduced by the Rapporteur.

147. At the same meeting, the Commission adopted the chapters of the draft report on its thirtieth session contained in documents E/CN.3/1999/L.4 and Add.1–3, as orally revised and amended, and E/CN.3/1999/L.4/Add.4 in an unedited English-only version, as orally revised and amended.

148. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the Netherlands, Australia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Iceland, Pakistan and Côte d'Ivoire.

149. At the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for Nigeria, Greece and Canada.

150. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for the International Labour Organization and the World Bank.

151. At the same meeting, statements were made by the observer for the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements.

152. Also at the same meeting, statements were made by the observers for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Europe, and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

153. At the same meeting, a statement was made by the observer for the ESCAP Committee on Statistics.

154. Also at the same meeting, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division made a statement.

Chapter XV
Organization of the session

A. Opening and duration of the session

155. The Statistical Commission held its thirtieth session at United Nations Headquarters from 1 to 5 March 1999. The Commission held 8 meetings (490th to 497th).

156. The session was opened by the temporary Chairman, Edvard Outrata (Czech Republic).

157. The Director of the United Nations Statistics Division made a statement.

B. Attendance

158. The session was attended by 24 States members of the Commission. Observers for other States Members of the United Nations and observers for intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations also attended. A list of participants is given in annex I to the present report.

C. Election of officers

159. At its 490th meeting, on 1 March, the Commission elected the following officers, by acclamation:

Chairman:
Guest Charumbira (Botswana)

Vice-Chairmen:
Miguel Cervera Flores (Mexico)
Victor Dinculescu (Romania)
Katherine Wallman (United States of America)

Rapporteur:
M. D. Asthana (India)

D. Agenda and organization of work

160. At the same meeting, the Commission adopted the provisional agenda contained in document E/CN.3/1999/1, as orally revised. The agenda was as follows:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Economic statistics:
   (a) National accounts;
   (b) International trade statistics;
   (c) Service statistics;
   (d) Finance statistics;
   (e) Other economic statistics.

4. Demographic, social and migration statistics.

5. Environment statistics.

6. Statistical implications of recent major United Nations conferences.

7. Follow-up to the agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council's high-level and coordination segments, and to its resolutions.

8. International economic and social classifications.

9. Technical cooperation.

10. Coordination and integration of international statistical programmes.

11. United Nations Economic and Social Information System.

12. The institute for statistics proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

13. Programme questions and related matters.

14. Provisional agenda and dates for the thirty-first session of the Commission.

15. Report of the Commission on its thirtieth session.

161. Also at the same meeting, the Commission approved the organization of the work of the session (E/CN.3/1999/L.1).

E. Documentation

162. The documents before the Commission at its thirtieth session are listed in annex II to the present report.

Annex I

Attendance

Members

Argentina	Héctor Eduardo Montero
Australia	W. McLennan, R. Edwards, B. Driscoll
Botswana	G. M. Charumbira, A. N. Majelantle
Bulgaria	A. Hadjiyski, V. Peeva, S. Basmadjiev
China	Shao Zongming, Fung Hing-Wang, Li Qiang, Feng Nailin
Colombia	Alfonso Valdivieso, Rene Verswyvel Villamizar
Côte d'Ivoire	Guessan Bi Kouassi, Gérard Chenais
Czech Republic	Edvard Outrata, Olga Bětiková
Germany	Günter Kopsch, Waltraud Moore, Roland Lindenthal, Helen Winter
Iceland	Hallgrímur Snorrason
India	M. D. Asthana
Jamaica	Valerie Nam, Annette McKenzie, David Prendergast
Japan	Masahiro Horie, Shuchi Watanabe, Osamu Tasaka, Hiroki Ohwaki, Makoto Shimizu, Yosuke Tada, Kazunari Irie, Satoru Hagino
Mexico	Miguel Cervera Flores, Antonio Puig Escudero, Mauricio Escanero, Mario Palma Rojo, Arturo Ponce
Netherlands	A. P. J. Abrahamse, W. F. M. De Vries, R. P. M. Luttikhuizen, M. I. Cochius
Pakistan	Fazlullah Qureshi
Portugal	Tadeu Soares, Catulina Guerreiro, Lídia Barreiros
Romania	Victor Dinculescu, Radu Felician Halus, Ovidiu Ierulescu
Russian Federation	Vladimir Sokolin, Andrey Kosarev, N. V. Tchulkov, A. A. Novikov, V. V. Erofeiev
Sudan	Mubarak Rahmtalla, Abdelmoneim Mohmed Luttfi
Togo	Nouridine Bouraima
Tunisia	Khélifa Ben Fekih
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland	Tim Holt, Jenny Church, Tony Williams, Roger Edmunds, Peter Gooderham, Ian Symons
United States of America	K. Wallman, S. Evinger, J. Steven Landefeld, Rosemary Marcuss, Katrina Reut, Edward Sondik, MaryAnne Freedman, Carole Ann Ambler, Maryann Wagner

States Members of the United Nations represented by observers

Algeria, Austria, Belarus, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Mongolia, Morocco, Nigeria, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, South Africa, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Zambia

Non-Member States of the United Nations

Switzerland

Entities maintaining permanent observer missions to the United Nations

Palestine

United Nations bodies

United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, United Nations Development Fund for Women, Conference of European Statisticians, Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP Committee on Statistics, Economic Commission for Africa, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, World Trade Organization

Intergovernmental organizations

Commonwealth of Independent States, Inter-American Development Bank, League of Arab States, Observatoire économique et statistique d'Afrique subsaharienne, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Organization of the Islamic Conference, Pan American Health Organization, Statistical Office of the European Communities, World Customs Organization

Non-governmental organizations

Special consultative status

Centro di Ricerca e Documentazione Febbraio 74,
International Statistical Institute

Expert

Robert Israel

Annex II

List of documents before the Commission at its thirtieth session

Document symbol	*Agenda item*	*Title or description*
E/CN.3/1999/1	2	Provisional agenda and annotations
E/CN.3/1999/2	3(a)	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on National Accounts
E/CN.3/1999/3	3(a)	Report of the Secretary-General on the milestone assessment of the implementation of the System of National Accounts, 1993, by member States
E/CN.3/1999/4	3(b)	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on International Trade Statistics
E/CN.3/1999/4/Add.1	3(b)	Addendum: Note by the Secretary-General on the follow-up to discussions and conclusions of the Task Force concerning the Commodity Trade Statistics Database and the Central Product Classification
E/CN.3/1999/5	3(c)	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services
E/CN.3/1999/6	3(d)	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Task Force on Finance Statistics
E/CN.3/1999/7	3(e)	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the city groups
E/CN.3/1999/7/Add.1	3(e)	Addendum: note by the Secretary-General transmitting a note prepared by the International Labour Office on the terms of reference and functioning of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics
E/CN.3/1999/8	3(e)	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the consultant on the evaluation of the International Comparison Programme
E/CN.3/1999/8/Add.1	3(e)	Addendum: note by the Secretary-General transmitting the observations of the World Bank on the report
E/CN.3/1999/9	4	Report of the Secretary-General on progress in demographic, social and migration statistics
E/CN.3/1999/10	4	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on Draft Principles and Recommendations fc. a Vital Statistics System
E/CN.3/1999/11	4	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Sienna Group for Social Statistics

Document symbol	*Agenda item*	*Title or description*
E/CN.3/1999/12	5	Report of the Secretary-General on environment statistics
E/CN.3/1999/13	5	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the London Group on Environmental Accounting
E/CN.3/1999/14	6	Report of the Secretary-General on harmonization and rationalization of development indicators in the United Nations system
E/CN.3/1999/15	6	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics
E/CN.3/1999/16	8	Report of the Secretary-General on evaluation of progress in the implementation of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3, and the Central Product Classification, Version 1.0
E/CN.3/1999/17	8	Report of the Secretary-General on international economic and social classifications
E/CN.3/1999/18	8	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics
E/CN.3/1999/19	9	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Workshop on Improving Technical Cooperation in Statistics on some guiding principles for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics
E/CN.3/1999/20	10	Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its nineteenth session
E/CN.3/1999/21	10	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on actions and decisions taken at its thirty-first session
E/CN.3/1999/22	10	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities on its thirty-second session
E/CN.3/1999/23	10	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the ad hoc group established by the Statistical Commission to explore new approaches to its structure and operation
E/CN.3/1999/24	10	Report of the Secretary-General on options for meetings of the Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination
E/CN.3/1999/25	10	Report of the Secretary-General on the global integrated presentation of the work plans of the international organizations in statistical methodology

Document symbol	*Agenda item*	*Title or description*
E/CN.3/1999/26	10	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Expert Group on Some Best Practices for Official Statistics
E/CN.3/1999/27	11	Report of the Secretary-General on draft standards of the United Nations Economic and Social Information System for data structure and metadata in international data exchange and dissemination
E/CN.3/1999/28	12	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the proposed institute for statistics
E/CN.3/1999/CRP.1 and Corr.1	13	Note by the Secretariat containing the draft programme of work of the United Nations Statistics Division for the biennium 2000–2001 and related information
E/CN.3/1999/CRP.2	13	Note by the Secretariat containing the medium-term plan of the United Nations Statistics Division for the period 1998–2001
E/CN.3/1999/L.1	2	Organization of the work of the session
E/CN.3/1999/L.2	2	Status of documentation for the session
E/CN.3/1999/L.3	14	Provisional agenda for the thirty-first session of the Commission
E/CN.3/1999/L.4 and Add.1–4	15	Draft report of the Commission
E/CN.3/1999/L.5	10	Draft resolution entitled "Functioning of the Statistical Commission", submitted by Australia, Botswana, Canada, Iceland, India, Mexico, the Netherlands, Singapore, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America
PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/84	3(a)	Draft classifications of expenditure according to purpose
PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/19/Rev.2	4	Draft principles and recommendations for a vital statistics system
A/53/16, part one	13	Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the first part of its thirty-eighth session (relevant extract)
A/53/122 and Add.1	13	Report of the Secretary-General on programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1996–1997 (relevant extract)
–	13	Background paper on the implementation plan and timetable for realizing the recommendations of the in-depth review of the statistical programme contained in document E/AC.51/1997/2

99-08870 (E) 010699